

Date: **October 2023**

Issue: **No. 4**

Subject: **Hepatitis B - Managing the Risk**

Introduction

This document forms part of the National Ice Centre's organisational written safety policy arrangements.

Departments, services or teams may consider it appropriate to develop additional guidance and systems of work on specific work related activities.

Where proposals, additional guidance or changes to systems of work will have an impact on health, safety and welfare, this will be discussed and agreed at the Health & Safety Committee.

If you have any questions or require further information or support on the contents of this document, please contact the NIC Health & Safety Advisor or Corporate Safety Advice.

Overview Of Management & Colleague Responsibilities

Manager Responsibilities Below is an overview of the responsibilities which is intended to support managers in identifying their key duties that need to be taken to comply with the requirements of this document and the safety management systems of the National Ice Centre.

- Managers must ensure that all work where there is a likely exposure to Hepatitis B has been assessed.
- Managers need to implement the controls identified within the assessment process to reduce the risk.
- Managers should ensure that the universal hygiene procedures are in place and implemented effectively.
- Managers must be aware of the procedures that are in place in the event that a colleague is identified as being involved in an incident that has the potential to cause infection.
- Where the risk remains, managers need to ensure that the Wellbeing and Health Improvement team are involved and consideration of an immunisation programme is considered.

Employee Responsibilities

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 section 7 requires all employees to consider their own health & safety and the safety of others.

As an employee of the National Ice Centre, if you have concerns in relation to health & safety that is likely to cause you or someone else, injury or ill health then you must ensure that the concern is communicated to your manager immediately.

You are also required to co-operate with the management of the National Ice Centre to ensure compliance with the health & safety arrangements, policies and procedures and work to the requirements identified within this document.

Transmission Methods Of The Hepatitis Virus

The three most common forms of the hepatitis virus are identified with the letters A, B, and C.

Each of these viruses differ in their severity and symptoms, as well as methods of transmission.

Hepatitis A

Generally transmitted through contamination of water or food from an infected person's faeces, Hepatitis A is generally considered as a concern in areas lacking sanitation or other safety standards.

Hepatitis A may have a sudden onset of symptoms but does not generally last long and can usually be treated successfully.

Hepatitis B

The disease can be transmitted through blood, sexual fluid, and contaminated needles.

In rare cases, it may be transferred through saliva.

Hepatitis B is an inflammation of the liver and this type of the hepatitis is known to cause chronic liver damage. Hepatitis B can lead to a chronic complications including cirrhosis of the liver as well as to cancer.

Hepatitis C

The most common form of hepatitis and is estimated to affect over four million people worldwide.

The virus is primarily transferred through blood but does not usually present many symptoms, if any at all.

Hepatitis C can develop as an acute or chronic illness.

There are certain tests administered by a doctor for the testing of hepatitis C.

Colleagues who suspect they have the disease should be informed that they need to contact their doctor.

The doctor can administer the correct test and make sure the proper course of treatment is given.

What Is Hepatitis B

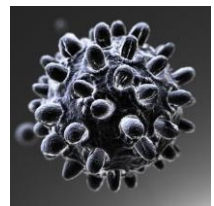
Hepatitis B is a blood borne virus that can cause inflammation of the liver.

Between 5 and 10% of adults who become infected to the virus will become carriers.

Both carriers and those with acute infections can be identified through a relevant blood test.

Any individual, who is in the acute phase of Hepatitis B, needs to be considered as a "high risk" with regard to the transmission of infection and extreme care must be taken when handling their bodily-fluids.

It is highly unlikely that you will be aware of any person who is either infected or a carrier so it is recommended that managers always follow the universal hygiene procedures



Managers should understand that along with the Hepatitis B virus, there are numerous other Hepatitis viruses from A to G.

Each of these has a different transmission method and will require different treatments.

However as with Hepatitis B, some viruses such as Hepatitis C are also transmitted by blood to blood contact.

Effects Of Hepatitis B

The effects of the Hepatitis B virus infection can be either acute or chronic.

Acute infection

This is considered as an illness that begins with general ill-health, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, body-aches, mild fever, dark urine, and then progresses to development of jaundice.

It has also been noted that itchy skin all over the body, has been an indication as a possible symptom of all hepatitis virus types.

The illness lasts for a few weeks and then gradually improves in most of the affected people.

A few patients may have more severe liver disease and may die as a result of it.

The infection may also be entirely asymptomatic and may go unrecognized.

Chronic infection

This is associated with a chronic inflammation of the liver, leading to cirrhosis over a period of several years.

This type of infection dramatically increases the potential for liver cancer.

Hepatitis B Risk Assessment

Managers must ensure that all working activities have been assessed where there is a potential for Hepatitis B infection or exposure to occur.

This assessment can then be used to identify whether there is adequate controls in place or if there is a need for additional precautions and control measures.

Active measures to reduce the potential for body fluid to body fluid contamination should be taken before relying on immunisation.

It must always be recognised that immunisation is the last form of control measure available and only provides protection from Hepatitis B and not from other infections and diseases that can be present.

Once the assessment is completed, all colleagues that may be affected by the activities covered within the assessment must be made aware of the contents of the assessment and advised as to appropriate controls that have been identified.

Immunisation Of Colleagues

If your work exposes you to potential sources of Hepatitis B, your manager must ensure that a Hepatitis B risk assessment has been carried out which identifies specific risks and required controls.

This risk assessment will identify if Hepatitis B immunisation may be appropriate to your role.

If there are any outstanding concerns regarding the levels of potential risk, with your manager must be made.

Actions Following Potential Exposure

If during your working activities, you suspect that you may have been exposed to Hepatitis B which may have led to infection, you are immediately required to make contact with your manager and make arrangements to visit an appropriate medical facility (doctor / hospital / walk in centre).

You must inform your manager of the incident as the exposure will need to be recorded as an accident / violent incident and may require amendments to the risk assessment.

If you have any questions regarding how you may be exposed to Hepatitis B or what precautions need to be utilised, initially talk to your line manager and where specialist technical advice or support is required, Corporate Safety Advice.

Further Information & References

The following information and reference material is in place to assist managers to understand their responsibilities and duties.

NIC Documentation and Links

- Risk Assessment Template (Hepatitis B)

External References

- INDG 342 – 'Blood-borne Viruses in the Workplace' (HSE)